

St Paul's Church, Scotforth: Communications Policy

Introduction

St Paul's is situated in the city of Lancaster where it serves a diverse range of individuals and families from across the socio-economic spectrum, and at all levels of education and employment. St Paul's access to such a wide range of people makes our efforts to promote and communicate the Gospel within and beyond our parish boundaries, a viable and worthwhile endeavour.

Until the Internet age, such communication depended on faith sharing and witness, preaching, sacramental celebrations and education programmes, and on print media such as the parish magazine. Now, parishioners and other members of the community enjoy access to information from St Paul's through a wide and growing range of electronic and print media including newspapers, magazines, weekly notice sheet, direct mail, radio, television, film, email, the internet and social networking sites.

To spread the Gospel effectively, and to advertise our activities, we need to welcome the use of this range of media. However, widely accessible communication of this kind is not without its challenges. We need to be *proactive*: to create well-planned, appropriate and thoughtful links between the message, its intended audience and the means of communication, so that the message is most likely to resonate with its intended audience. We also need to be *protective*: to reduce the problems that arise when ease of computer access leads to unauthorised and inconsistent posting of information, or inconsistency between information on one medium and similar material on another.

The rapidly changing nature of communications technology adds to these challenges.

The Policy

Background

The following policy applies to all forms of communication produced by St Paul's.

Communications Channels

St Paul's Incumbent, Wardens and Parish Business Manager have the sole responsibility for editorial policies governing print and electronic publications of the parish. The following list reflects the current communications mix:

- Parish Website
- Website generated communications
- Weekly notice sheets
- Parish magazine
- Special occasion bulletins
- Posters and displays
- Social media

- Any other communication as authorised by St Paul’s Incumbent or Wardens.

Part 1: Summary

Purpose of this policy

This policy has been decided:

- To guide, support and protect the “communication personnel” who take on responsibility for St Paul’s external communications,
- To help others in the St Paul’s community to understand what can reasonably be asked of these communications personnel,
- To protect the integrity and unique style of St Paul’s information,
- To maximise our use of best practice in our external communications,
- To minimise the risk to St Paul’s reputation that can be caused by improper and unauthorised external communications.

Definitions

“Internal communication” is defined as any means of conveying church-related information to parishioners.

“External communication” includes any public representation of St Paul’s to parishioners as well as to the greater community via news releases, interviews with news media on behalf of the church, notice sheets, the St Paul’s website, social networking (i.e. Facebook, Instagram), print advertising, and posters or displays using the St Paul’s name and/or logo.

“Communications personnel” includes salaried office staff and appointed officers, e.g. magazine editors.

Key Points

- i. The purpose of church communications is to relay information about the Gospel and about our parish to a broad, or to a specific audience.
- ii. St Paul’s Incumbent and Wardens have sole responsibility for editorial policies governing church communications.
- iii. Church communications may not be used for partisan political messages, or for paid advertising, unless this use has been authorised by the Incumbent or Wardens.
- iv. Only the Incumbent or Wardens may instigate, or respond to request for, communications with the broadcast media or press on behalf of the parish unless appointed, see (v).
- v. The Incumbent or Wardens may authorise the parish’s appointed communication officers, other communications personnel and/or parish staff to act on their behalf whenever required.
- vi. All of St Paul’s social media sites will make it clear that, by posting a comment to that site, users give St Paul’s the irrevocable permission to exercise all rights with respect to the content provided. This includes removing the posted material, or using it for any purpose in any form

and on any media, including but not limited to: displaying, modifying, reproducing or distributing it, creating other works from it and publishing it.

- vii. All St Paul's communications will make it clear that if individuals under 18 years of age fill out any Submission Forms, send us an email message and/or use any service on our social media sites which will require them to provide personal information, then they must demonstrate that they have the permission of their parent or guardian.
- viii. At church events, if photographs or videos are being taken by communications personnel, this will be made clear to participants. Such photos or videos would normally be made available for use in church communications. If an individual or family member wishes that such photos or videos in which they or their relatives are prominently displayed should *not* be used, they should complete a Media Policy Opt Out Form (see appendix 1) that is available online or from the Incumbent, Wardens, data protection officer or parish office. This will be used to direct communications personnel not to use such photos or videos. Similarly, the Media Policy Opt Out Form can be used to instruct the church not to use an individual's name in communications.

Part 2: Policy

Purpose of Church Communications

The purpose of church communications is to relay information about the Gospel and about our parish to a broad, or to a specific, audience.

Probable audiences include the members and friends of St Paul's, newcomers to the area, and others residing within the local community including Christians of all denominations, members of other faith traditions and all people of good will. Information will include information about the programmes, events and activities taking place at or being sponsored by the parish. The content and style of communications will be reflective of St Paul's mission and goals.

Responsibility

St Paul's Incumbent and Wardens have the sole responsibility for editorial policies governing the print and electronic publications of the parish.

St Paul's Incumbent and Wardens in collaboration with communications personnel will maintain the integrity and quality of information being delivered by:

- Including, in an unbiased way, content that supports or fulfils the above stated purpose,
- Taking reasonable precautions to protect the privacy of parishioners,
- Editing material that is too long or that needs correction in grammar, spelling, or style,
- Refusing material that is not appropriate,
- Ensuring that the safeguards listed in the Key Points above (items vi to viii) are put into effect.

Prohibited use of External Communications

Partisan Communication

Church communications may not be used for partisan political messages. Association with, representation or endorsement of (or by) any political candidate, party, or campaign, whether actual or implied, is prohibited, unless approved by the Incumbent and Wardens.

Advertising

No aspect of church communications may be used to promote any activity resulting in financial gain of a staff member unless approved by the Incumbent or Wardens.

Unauthorised Communications Channels

Only the Incumbent and Wardens and communications personnel can authorise the communication channels that will be used for church communications. Communications personnel will not make use of unauthorised websites, blogs, social network sites, direct mailings for church communications and should not use the parish name and/or logo on unauthorised channels.

Spokespersons

Only the Incumbent or Wardens may communicate directly with members of the broadcast media or press on behalf of the parish. Ministry volunteers are not authorised to represent the church in speaking to such media unless they seek prior approval from the Incumbent or Wardens. Volunteers who are approached by the media must direct enquiries to the Incumbent or Wardens.

Part 3: Procedures and Guidelines

The following represents current Procedures and Guidelines for current channels of both Internal and External Communication.

Parish Website

St Paul's has one authorised website, <http://www.stpauls-scotforth.org>

Communications personnel and the webmaster writes copy, selects graphics, takes and uploads photographs, enters news information, inserts suitable links and maintains the website in general.

The webmaster ensures that the website, website pages, and all links function properly.

The webmaster strives to ensure the website meets the needs of visitors, members, and friends of the church and works to expand usage of the site.

Information from the weekly notice sheet is added to the site weekly and the parish magazine added ten times per year.

The parish website includes links only to non-commercial sites that are not in conflict with the parish mission and goals.

St Paul's communications personnel strive to be present at as many church functions as possible. However, parishioners are always invited to send their own story or photos of events to the communications personnel for inclusion onto the website or in any parish communications.

All of our venues are public spaces where photographs or videos may be taken. If you do not want your image to be used please talk to the photographer or videographer. Often, these images will be made available for use on the website or other media. If an individual or family member, wishes that photos or videos in which they or their relatives are prominently displayed should *not* be used in this way, they should complete a Media Policy Opt Out Form that is available online or from the Incumbent, Wardens, data protection officer or parish office.

It is St Paul's policy not to post photos of children, or to identify them by name, in situations where a parent/guardian has completed the Media Release Opt Out Form. Similarly, it is our policy not to post photos of individuals, or identify them by name, if they have completed a Media Release Opt Out Form. However mistakes can happen. If at any time an image appears on the parish website or other media that an individual or parent/guardian wishes to be removed, they should contact the parish office and it will be removed immediately.

If individuals under 18 years of age, fill out any Submission Forms, send us an email message and/or use any service on our social media sites which will require them to provide personal information, then they must demonstrate that they have the permission of their parent or guardian.

All comments submitted to our website will be screened by the webmaster to ensure that they are written in the spirit of being respectful of the church and its teachings.

By submitting a comment or material of any kind to a St Paul's social media site, the user agrees to the following: St Paul's may review all comments before they are posted, and edit them to preserve readability for other users, and may reject or remove comments for any reason. Comments will be deemed to be inappropriate if they use unsuitable language, attack a single person or group, make statements that are in contradiction to parish policy, or include spam that explicitly promotes a product or service. A decision to reject or remove a comment on other grounds can be made by St Paul's Incumbent or Wardens.

The intention of these guidelines on the use of our website is to ensure that the site gives witness to the Gospel in a way that is open, transparent, and safe for all users.

Social Media, i.e. Facebook and Instagram

As the Administrator, communications personnel are responsible for managing content and the frequency of updates, and for monitoring commentary on our official St Paul's Facebook pages.

Content represents current and upcoming events, photos, news, and commentary related to the activities of St Paul's Church. It is reflective of the parish mission statement. In the case of St Paul's Parish Hall and Hala Centre Facebook – this is used to market the venues and the groups based within them.

All posts and comments on the St Paul's Church Facebook page should be characterised by Christian charity and respect for truth. They should be on topic and should presume the good will of other posters. Discussion should take place primarily from a faith perspective.

Individuals should not post comments under multiple names or using another person's name.

No social media sites are to be created by individual's for church communications unless those individuals are employed by, or authorised by St Paul's.

The use of photographs, videos and names in our social media is governed by the same rules as those that apply to the use of photographs, videos and names on our website.

By submitting a comment or material of any kind to a St Paul's social media site, the user hereby agrees to the following: St Paul's may review all comments before they are posted, and edit them to preserve readability for other users, and may reject or remove comments for any reason. Comments will be deemed to be inappropriate if they use unsuitable language, attack a single person or group, make statements that are in contradiction to parish policy, or include spam that explicitly promotes a product or service. A decision to reject or remove a comment on other grounds can be made by St Paul's Incumbent and/or Wardens.

The intention of these guidelines on the use of our social media site is to ensure that the site gives witness to the Gospel in a way that is open, transparent, and safe for all users.

St Paul's Weekly Notice Sheet

Content is compiled by the Parish Office Administrators in collaboration with Wardens.

Due to limited space, not all material that is submitted to the parish office can be included. If it is not included, the team will do their best to include it in the following weeks' notice sheet.

St Paul's Parish Magazine

Content is compiled by the Parish Magazine Editorial Team.

Due to limited space, not all material that is submitted to the editorial team can be included. If it is not included, the team will do their best to include it in the next edition.

St Paul's Church reserves the right to amend this "St Paul's Church: Communications Policy" from time to time. This will be done to address issues that may arise, or to accommodate changes in our parish.

Approved by the PCC February 2020 – to be reviewed annually

St Paul's Church, Scotforth

Photo "Opt-Out" Form

St Paul's Church offers many programs and activities. Photographs may be taken during these events and may be posted to the church website or social media accounts. If you do not wish to have your picture posted to the church website or social media accounts, please fill out this form and return it to a warden or the parish office.

Privacy Policy—published images to the church website or social media accounts will never include names of adults or children (first or last) or any other personal information unless further verbal or written permission is obtained prior to use.

I hereby do not give permission for St Paul's Church to use photographic images of the following individuals (please fill in names below) on the church website or social media accounts:

Adult Names:

Child Names:

I, _____, am the parent or legal guardian of the above named children. I have read and understand the provisions of this document.

_____ Parent/Guardian Signature

Date _____

*If you give permission for the use of your photographic image to appear on the website of St Paul's Church, this form does not need to be signed and returned.

(This opt-out form is valid from the date received by the church office – Date: _____)